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THE MUSICAL TIMES,

And Singing Class Circular.

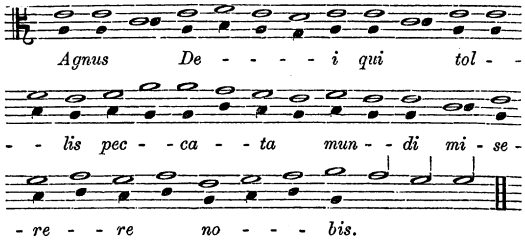
JULY 1st, 1849.

HISTORIC SKETCH OF CHURCH MUSIC,

Condensed from Alexandre Choron's "Principes de Composition."

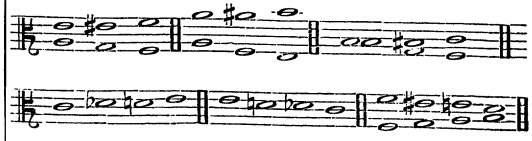
(Continued from page 164.)

After Franco, music remained in the same state, particularly with regard to harmony, for more than a century; which may be attributed to the Crusades taking place about that time, and so completely occupying the attention of all Europe. I shall therefore merely mention, in a cursory manner, Walter Odington, a Benedictine monk of Evesham, in England, who flourished in 1240, and whose work, "*De Speculatione Musicæ*," is only a commentary on the doctrine of Franco, enriched with a few developements relative to time. As much may be said with regard to the work of another English author, Robert of Handlo, entitled "*Regulæ cum maximis Magistri Franconis, cum additionabus aliorum Musicorum, compilatæ per R. de H.*," dated 1326. To give, however, some idea of the composition of that time, I shall here cite a specimen, taken from a manuscript of the thirteenth century.



This descant was composed on the following rule:—"Those who chant, should remark if the chant ascends or descends. If it ascends, the double note is sung; if it descends, the fifth note."

Towards the close of the thirteenth century, we find another commentator on Franco, far more interesting than the before-mentioned, and who, in some respects, may be styled an inventor. This was Marchetti, of Padua, author of several works, particularly one on plain-chant, bearing date, Verona, 1274. He must have written this work when very young, for we have another of his, on measured music, dedicated to Robert, king of Naples; and this prince reigned from 1309 to 1344. We find by these writings, that, at this period, they had admitted a new degree of subdivision of time, by adding a fourth to the three before-mentioned times or values, namely, the *minim*. Descant had also advanced a little; and about this time, chromatic passages were first used. The following are specimens:—



The author gives the theory of them, and treats of chromatic and enharmonic genera at some length, In short, it is evident the art had then sensibly advanced. This remark is confirmed by the writings of John de Muris, doctor of the Sorbonne, who some say was an Englishman, others, a Parisian, and others again, a Norman; the latter of which is most probable. He was long looked upon as the author of all the inventions we have been mentioning, particularly of rhythm and the form of notes; and would most probably still have been considered so, if the researches of M. Gerbert and Dr. Burney had not proved the contrary. It even appears he did not considerably aid the advancement of musical notation; in regard to harmony, however, we are much indebted to him. The impropriety of making two consecutive perfect consonances by similar movement, was first suggested in his writings; as were many other precepts relating to the succession of intervals, which are observed to this day. We also find in his works, for the first time, the term *counterpoint* used instead of *descant*. It would appear that, about this time, there was a great variety of opinions respecting the rules of counterpoint, for the doctor complains of the continual changes in the art of music; and about the same period, that is to say in the year 1322, Pope John XXII., issued a bull, forbidding the use of the descant in churches, it having degenerated into abuses, and having no longer any fixed principles. It is believed that John of Muris was still living in the year 1345. He, as well as Franco, had many commentators; amongst whom were Philip de Vitry, of whom little more is known than the name, and Pro-

doscimo de Beldomando, of Padua, who was a professor of music in that town in the year 1422, but whose writings are now lost. From the thirteenth century to the close of the fifteenth, there is a complete vacancy in the history of counterpoint. It is generally supposed that no vestage now remains of the compositions of that period.

(To be continued.)

NOVELLO'S CHEAP ORATORIOS.

From the "Morning Herald."

The musical reprints of Mr. Alfred Novello are probably the most extraordinary instances of typographical economy of the present day. The publications of this intelligent and industrious publisher belong to a class of art hitherto supported but by a limited portion of the public, and hence the demand for the ordinary pianoforte and vocal scores of oratorios, and other large ecclesiastical works, has scarcely been sufficient to repay the "paper and print," even at the high rates charged for them. Music has, however, made giant strides within the last year or two, and Mr. Novello, wise in his generation, has not been indifferent to the impulse, but has aided its course in an honest and rational direction, with a liberality and zeal meriting the highest panegyric. It is well known that many of the most valuable copyrights are vested in his hands; and that for many years past his house has been the sole depository of the various branches of church music, and that under his father's able and authoritative editorship a multitude of works have been given to the world, which would otherwise have been, from their general inaccessibility, still sealed to the public, and a source of enjoyment, swelling with every new incentive, totally ungratified. The rapid growth of choral societies, and their existence now in every city and town in the kingdom, is fast gaining for England a solid reputation in the practical developements of music; and recognising this fact, Mr. Novello supports the movement by throwing open the entire stores of his establishment at vastly reduced rates—a concession to the public means in which we do not doubt he will eventually find his account, although attended at the outset with great pecuniary sacrifice. Our present object, however, is not to touch upon this epoch in Mr. Novello's career as a publisher—for he has explained the principles upon which he builds his future hopes and expectations in a certain little brochure of *Reasons*, which may be had for asking for—but to bestow a few words of commendation upon the small editions of *chefs d'œvre*, which, in the spirit alluded to, he is now originating. We have had cheap reproductions of the *Messiah*, the *Creation*, the *Dettingen Te Deum*, *Jephtha*, and *Judas Maccabæus*, before this; but we have never reached the minimum until now, for these works are issued at a price that literally places them within the reach of the million. The size (royal octavo) scarcely exceeds that of many operatic librettos, and hence the value of the publication, as companions to the public concert-room; while the exquisite beauty of the typography, and the tasteful illumination of the binding, give them a drawing-room character, which will also be duly prized and applauded. Although the type is small, it is wonderfully distinct, and in this respect is greatly superior to the printing by metal types, with which modern ingenuity has made us familiar; but, above all, the oratorios emanate from the press under the control and supervision of Mr. Vincent Novello, whose name ensures the fidelity of the text, and the certainty that the responsibilities of editorship are vigilantly and critically discharged. The success of the enterprise has, we believe, been unbounded; and we have been informed that some 20,000 copies of the *Messiah* alone have already been sold! To the works we have enumerated, Mr. Novello has added, in similarity of form and price, Mendelssohn's *St. Paul;* and we observe Handel's *Israel in Egypt* is in course of periodical issue. We can but commend the series to the attention of those who have not yet met with them; for they more than justify the publisher's profession of cheapness, and in every respect warrant the admiration which has been so lavishly bestowed upon them.—*Morning Herald*, June 18th.

IMPROVEMENT OF CHURCH MUSIC IN THE ARCHDEACONRY OF MONMOUTH.

To the Editor of the "Musical Times."

Llangibby, near Usk, June 20, 1849.

SIR,—Having lately received a prospectus of the "Musical Times," in which it is stated that communications of the progress of Singing-Class teaching will be interesting to your readers, I take the liberty of enclosing a copy of the First Annual Report of a Society formed last year, in this county, for the Improvement of Church Music. A practical part of the Society's operations consists in affording instruction to Church Choirs, by making grants from its funds in aid of the establishment of Singing-Classes in places where they could not otherwise be maintained. The following list shews the nature of the Society's operations during the past year, the first of its existence; but it is hoped its sphere will in future be considerably extended:—

Parishes.	No. of Pupils in Class	Period of Instruction for which aid given.	Name of Teacher.
Llantarnam Malpas ..	30	1 year	Mr. T. R. Price, Organist of St. Woollo's, Newport
Risca ...	15	* 3 months	Mr. H. J. Groves Organist of St. Paul's, Newport
Goytie Llanoair ..	30	* 1 year	Dr. Wastfield, Organist of Usk.
Bryngwyn	20	6 months	Ditto
Mainhilad	14	6 months	Ditto
Llanarth ..	20	* 3 months	Ditto

* In these cases, the grants were for the continuance of Classes previously existing.

The whole of these classes were conducted on the system of Hullah.

The annual meeting of the society for the present year, is to be held at Newport, on the 17th July.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM A. WILLIAMS, Jun.

[We shall be glad to hear of similar associations in other towns.—ED. of *M. T.*]